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Editorial

Association of Surgeons in Training Conference: Manchester 2013

A B S T R A C T

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The Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) is a professional body and registered charity working to promote excellence in surgical training for the benefit of junior doctors and patients alike. With a membership of over 2000 surgical trainees from all ten surgical specialities, the association provides support at both regional and national levels throughout the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. Originally founded in 1976, ASiT is independent of the National Health Service (NHS), Surgical Royal Colleges, and specialty associations. The 2013 Annual Conference in Manchester brought together over 700 delegates for an educational weekend programme with expert guest speakers. Cutting edge clinical updates were complimented by debates on current training in surgery and focussed parallel sessions. The weekend started with 13 pre-conference courses covering a diverse range of topics including laparoscopic skills, ultrasound for surgeons, surgical drawing, core skills in neurosurgery and a masterclass in journal club. A record number of 1458 abstract submissions were received and those successful competed for 22 awards representing nearly £4000 in trainee prizes and bursaries. As the only national surgical trainee meeting for all specialties, ASiT continues to grow and we look forward to an even larger and more successful international conference next year.

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1. Conference report

As the only pan-speciality national conference for surgical trainees in the UK and Ireland, the Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) annual meeting offers a unique opportunity for clinical updates, training courses, research presentations and careers talks specifically aimed at surgical trainees. Combined with numerous prizes, a Charity Gala Dinner and the opportunity to socialise with colleagues from across the country, the weekend has become an essential date in the diary for all surgical trainees (Figs. 1–7).

Following on from the success of ASiT's recent conference meetings in Sheffield in 2011 and Cardiff in 2012^{1,2} this year Manchester played host to over 700 delegates from the UK, Republic of Ireland and overseas. With a record number of 1458 abstract submissions, the conference offered an excellent forum for presenting trainee audit and research work. The trends over recent years, together with the abstract submission categories are detailed in Table 1. Following a rigorous peer-review process, the highest scoring abstracts were accepted for poster presentations, with the best selected for presentation in one of the four oral prize presentation sessions.

In total, over £4000 in prizes, grants and bursaries were available for the best conference trainee and medical student presentations. Numerous surgical associations, charities and companies have joined together with ASiT and other surgical specialty trainee associations to sponsor these, and all offer a prestigious addition to

a surgeon's curriculum vitae. Details of these awards are provided in Table 2.

The pre-conference course day started the meeting on Friday, in advance of the main plenary sessions on Saturday and Sunday. With a record number of 13 courses running simultaneously, these popular training sessions offered great value-for-money and covered a broad range of topics useful for trainees at all levels. We are grateful to the work of the course convenors in organising these, who are listed in Table 3.

The pre-conference course day finished with a 'Welcome Reception and Light Dinner' in the Manchester Central conference venue. This year we hosted Mr Ian Ritchie, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd) who provided a thought-provoking welcome speech.

Following a warm welcome from Mr Steve Hornby (Surgical Registrar and ASiT President 2012–2013), Saturday morning saw the start of the main conference, and programme highlights are listed in Table 4.

The plenary sessions started with an emotive talk from Dr Kate Granger, a Registrar in Elderly Care Medicine and herself a terminally ill cancer patient. Dr Granger offered the audience a chance to "laugh, cry and reflect" on her journey through being a patient, including her recent prominent media work as a strong advocate for the Liverpool Care Pathway. With the benefit of her own experiences, she extolled the importance of treating patients as people and putting them at the centre of our care.



Fig. 1. Delegates practice with fresh animal tissue on a pre-conference skills course.

Mr Chris Oppong, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon and Chairman of the Board of Operation Hernia, spoke next with a fascinating insight into humanitarian surgery. Talking about the unmet needs of surgical care in the developing world, he also outlined the role that Operation Hernia has played in supporting this.

Following this came the ever-popular 'Question Time' session with the Royal Surgical Colleges, featuring Professor Norman Williams (President, Royal College of Surgeons of England), Mr Mike Lavelle-Jones (Vice-President, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh), Mr Michael McKirdy (Council Member Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow) and Professor Patrick Broe (President, Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland). There

followed presentations regarding the work and role of each of the various Royal Colleges with a robust questioning for the trainee audience.

This year's ASiT Lecture was provided by Mr David O'Regan, Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon, himself a former ASiT President and founder of ASiT's Silver Scalpel Award. Addressing the 'the Role of a Mentor in Surgical Training' he provided an insightful discussion regarding those who have helped change the directions of our lives and careers, challenging us to plan out our goals and career plans with suitable mentors. This was followed by the formal launch of the ASiT National Mentoring Scheme Pilot by our Director of Education. Phase 1 is currently underway.



Fig. 2. Delegates practice laparoscopic surgery skills on a pre-conference course.



Fig. 3. Dr Kate Granger opened the conference with an emotive talk which included her first-hand experience of being a patient.

Clinical surgery took centre-stage next, with an overview of new developments in trauma surgery by Professor Susan Brundage, trauma surgeon at the New York University Langone Medical Center and Barts and the London. Professor Simon Kay, the surgeon responsible for the UK's first hand transplant, then provided us with an update on this and the new frontiers beings reached in plastic surgery.

Following lunch and poster presentation judging, the afternoon commenced with a session addressing the role of research in surgical training. Mr Tom Pinkney, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon, discussed the development and role of registrar research collaboratives. Professor Des Winter, Consultant Colorectal

Surgeons at St Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin and an Editor of the British Journal of Surgery, provided an in-depth view on navigating a research fellowship.

The Ansell ASiT Medal oral prize presentation session hosted the highest scoring abstract submissions of the conference, with some excellent reports of high-impact surgical research. Following this, the 2012 ASiT Covidien Travelling Fellowship award winners and the ASiT Elsevier Medical Student Elective prizewinner presented their experiences.

The afternoon concluded with the ASiT Debate: "Are work-place based assessments a valid tool for assessment?" Mr Ian Eardley (Chair of the JCST), Mr Ben Dean (orthopaedic surgery registrar),



Fig. 4. Professor Norman Williams, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, speaks during the Royal College Question and Answer Session with trainees.



Fig. 5. Professor Susan Brundage provides an overview of new developments in trauma surgery.

and Gill Humphries (Patient Liaison Group, RCSEng) spoke in turn, with an interesting debate following.

Saturday evening saw the social highlight of the weekend, with nearly 300 delegates and guests attending the Charity Gala Dinner Party at the famous Midland Hotel in central Manchester. The 2013 dinner was held in aid of Lifebox, a not-for-profit organization saving lives by improving the safety and quality of surgical care in low-resource countries (<http://www.lifebox.org/>). The raffle prize draw raised over £1500 for this worthy cause. Following a drinks reception and excellent four-course dinner the nominees

for the ASiT Swann-Morton Silver Scalpel Award were presented with certificates to recognise their contributions to surgical training; their details are provided in Table 5. The 2013 prizewinner was Mr Clive Hepworth, Consultant General and Colorectal Surgeon at the Queen's Hospital, Essex. A memorable evening concluded with great entertainment from an excellent six-piece live band, "The Arrhythmics", with dancing into the early hours.

On Sunday morning the Medical Student and Foundation Doctor Parallel Session continued to draw a crowd of keen junior attendees. This year's talks covered preparing for a career in surgery,



Fig. 6. Poster presentations provided a forum for high quality trainee research in surgery.



Fig. 7. Nearly 300 trainees attended the Charity Gala Dinner Party, held in aid of Lifebox.

how to tackle your first surgical job, and a ‘battle of the surgeons’ careers fair where delegates were able to hear Registrars from all the main surgical specialities sell their specialty to attendees. The keynote speaker of the morning session was Professor Harold Ellis, who drew such a crowd that he was swiftly moved into the main auditorium where he provided a hugely entertaining talk on the future of surgery.

For the first time in 2013, new parallel sessions were introduced with the Women in Surgery (WinS) group hosting a dedicated seminar and also the National Research Collaborative (NRC) providing a pan-specialty update on the activities of the various new groups together with the announcement of the National Research Collaborative Audit Project for 2013.

Table 1
Trends in abstract submission to the ASiT conference.

Category	2010	2011	2012	2013
Basic science including anatomy	14	18	21	27
Breast surgery	30	43	60	59
Cardiothoracic surgery	21	11	26	28
Case reports	87	109	121	179
Coloproctology	59	76	87	131
Endocrine surgery	5	13	12	10
ENT surgery	43	73	76	94
Hepatopancreatobiliary	21	20	26	35
Maxillofacial surgery	8	11	7	26
Military	–	–	–	1
Miscellaneous surgery	55	71	110	93
Neurosurgery	5	13	18	22
Orthopaedics	85	99	141	155
Paediatric surgery	7	15	11	21
Plastic surgery	28	31	52	83
Surgical training and education	80	111	160	168
Transplant surgery	3	6	8	7
Trauma/emergency surgery	29	44	62	91
Upper-gastrointestinal surgery	29	40	40	54
Urology	40	37	69	80
Vascular/endovascular surgery	55	89	61	94
Total abstracts submitted	704	930	1168	1458

Note: Breakdown not available pre-2010. Abstracts undergo anonymous peer review by a minimum of three reviewers, with only the highest marked (~50%) accepted for presentation.

In the main hall the morning started with the ASiT-ASGBI Short Paper Session, which together with the SARS ASiT Academic and Research Surgery session saw the remaining highest-scoring abstract authors present their work. Mr Charlie Giddings, a former ASiT President and now Consultant ENT and Head & Neck Surgeon, gave an overview of undertaking a surgical fellowship overseas following his travels to Brisbane in Australia. Mr Dermot O’Riordan, also a former ASiT President and now Consultant Surgeon and Medical Director of his hospital, gave an informative talk regarding what hospitals look for in a Consultant Surgeon. The morning session

Table 2
ASiT conference surgical trainee research & audit prizes.

Pan-Specialty Presentation Prizes

- Ansell ASiT medal
- SARS ASiT academic & research surgery prize
- ASGBI ASiT short paper prize
- Ethicon ASiT surgical education prize
- Elsevier ASiT medical student prize
- Patient Liaison Group Patient Safety Prize
- RCSEng/ASiT poster presentation prize
- International journal of surgery case report prizes
- ASiT-EduSurg short oral presentation prize
- ASiT-EduSurg surgical education poster prize

Surgical Specialty Trainee Prizes

- Orthopaedic research UK prize
- BASO the association of cancer surgery prize
- AUGIS trainee prize
- ALSGBI trainee prize
- BAOMS prize

Specialty Trainee Group Prizes

- ASiT-Rouleaux club prize (vascular)
- ASiT-AOT prize (ENT)
- ASiT-SURG prize (urology)
- ASiT-PLASTA prize (plastic surgery)
- ASiT-Dukes’ Club/ACPGBI prize (colorectal)
- ASiT-mammary fold prize (breast)
- ASiT-BNTA prize (neurosurgery)

Note: Prize winning abstracts are highlighted in the published abstracts section of this supplement.

Table 3
Educational pre-conference courses.

ASiT Foundation skills in surgery course <i>Course convenor: Mr Joseph Shalhoub</i>
ASiT/SARS/BJS Research skills course <i>Course convenor: Mr Vimal Gokani</i>
ASiT/Covidien Core laparoscopic skills course <i>Course convenor: Mr Frank McDermott</i>
ASiT ALSGBI Intermediate laparoscopic skills course <i>Course convenor: Mr Jonny Wild</i>
ASiT Local reconstruction training course <i>Course convenors: Mr Zaid Awad and Mr Charles Giddings</i>
ASiT Mentoring & coaching skills course <i>Course convenors: Mr Matt Driver and Mr Andrew Alalade</i>
IJS How to get published course <i>Course convenor: Mr Riaz Agha</i>
ASiT Introductory neurosurgical skills course <i>Course convenors: Mr Adam Williams and Mr Will Muirhead</i>
ASiT Ultrasound scanning for surgical trainees course <i>Course convenors: Dr James Marran and Mr Andrew Robson</i>
ASiT Cardiac surgery course <i>Course convenor: Mr David McCormack</i>
Masterclass in Journal Club/FRCS Academic viva course <i>Course convenors: Mr Ajay Sharma and Mr Saba Balasubramanian</i>
ASiT GI surgical stapling and energised dissection course <i>Course convenor: Mr Dhya Al-Leswas</i>
ASiT Surgical art workshop <i>Course convenor: Mr Paul Malone</i>

concluded with Mr Andrew Hollowood, who discussed strategies to maximise trainees' opportunities in surgical training.

Afternoon sessions continued with the Silver Scalpel Award Lecture, traditionally given by the previous year's award winner. This was delivered by Mr Humphrey Scott, who provided his view of excellence in surgical training. The penultimate session included an update on the state and future of the Joint Committee on Surgical Training (JCST), provided by the JCST Chair Mr Ian Eardley, and an update on recruitment into surgery from Dr Alison Carr (Consultant Anaesthetist and Senior Clinical Advisor, Directorate of Education and Quality at Health Education England). The session finished

Table 4
Programmes highlights.

Keynote conference speakers
Cutting edge plastic surgery: hand transplantation <i>Professor Simon Kay</i>
Cancer, surgery and the liverpool care pathway <i>Dr Kate Granger</i>
ASiT lecture: the role of a mentor in surgical training <i>Mr David O'Regan</i>
The future of surgical training <i>Professor Harold Ellis</i>
Cutting edge trauma management <i>Professor Susan Brundage</i>
Humanitarian surgery <i>Mr Chris Oppong</i>
Navigating a research fellowship <i>Professor Des Winter</i>
Key conference sessions
• Question time with surgical royal college presidents
• Update on surgical recruitment
• Leadership focus: What does a Medical Director look for in a surgeon?
• Career focus: overseas fellowships
• ASiT debate: Are workplace-based assessments a valid tool for assessment?
• ASiT silver scalpel award and lecture
Key parallel sessions
• National surgical research collaboratives session
• Women in surgery session
• Medical student and foundation doctors parallel session

Table 5
ASiT Swann-Morton Silver Scalpel Award 2013 nominees.

Mr Clive Hepworth (2013 winner) Consultant General and Colorectal Surgeon Queen's Hospital, Essex.
Mr Neil Hulton Consultant Vascular and General Surgeon, Royal Oldham Hospital Programme Director, North West School of Surgery
Mr Nizam Mamode Consultant Transplant Surgeon, Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, London

with an informative talk from Mr Peter Lamont regarding vascular surgery's recognition as an independent surgical specialty and the implications for current and future trainees.

The conference sessions ended with the medical student prize presentation session for the highest-marked medical student abstracts. Presentation of the prizes concluded the meeting, which was closed with a few words from the incoming ASiT President for 2013–2014, Mr Andrew Beamish.

As ever, the Association is indebted to our corporate partners who recognise the importance of supporting the ASiT Conference and investing in a future generation of surgeons. This year saw a considerably larger exhibition with 33 organisations attending and many others supporting the event. From international charities

Table 6
ASiT corporate sponsors and exhibitors.

Platinum corporate sponsor
• Ethicon
Gold corporate sponsor
• Medical Protection Society
Silver corporate sponsors
• Ansell Healthcare Europe
• CareFusion
• KCI Medical
• BMJ on Examination
• Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
• Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
• Royal College of Surgeons of England
• Wesleyan Medical Sickness
Other exhibitors and sponsors
• Africa Health Placements
• Association of Surgeons in Primary Care
• Army Medical Services – Territorial Army
• Belfast Conference Bureau
• British Journal of Surgery
• Cochrane Collaboration (colorectal)
• Doctors Support Network
• Dr Podcast
• Inovus Surgical Solutions
• Laprotrain
• Lifebox
• Limbs and Things
• Medical Defence Union
• Olympus
• Operation Hernia
• Oxford University Press
• PasTest
• Royal Medical Benevolent Fund
• Royal Society of Medicine
• Swann-Morton Ltd
• University of Oxford surgical science and practice programme
• Wesleyan
• Wetlab

Table 7

ASiT conference 2013 feedback from delegates.

Written feedback
"Many thanks for an excellent conference"
"You guys put on a conference twice as good and for half the price of the ASGBI conference held a few weeks after. Many thanks."
"Overall thought it was an excellent conference with well-chosen speakers and topics, and a great opportunity for trainees to present their work"
"Very good selection [of courses] were available - many thanks"
"Abstracts being published is very good aspect of the conference. Well done all"
"Excellent course. The trainers were very enthusiastic and approachable. Keep it up!"
"Fantastic course. Unbelievable value for money. Many thanks"
Feedback survey data
Would you recommend an ASiT Conference to a colleague?
Yes = 97.2%
Would you attend an ASiT Conference in the future?
Yes = 90.0%

to multinational companies, we were pleased to introduce delegates to them and thank them all for their continued support. The names of sponsors and exhibitors are provided in Table 6.

Through this industry support we were able to make a new addition to this year's conference, with the 'ASiT Training Zone' situated in the main exhibition hall. The opportunity to practice open and laparoscopic surgical techniques with expert trainers and hi-tech equipment was well received. ASiT is grateful to Mr David O'Regan, WetLab and Laprotrain for generously offering their time and equipment over the course weekend.

Conference feedback from delegates was strongly supportive and continued to improve on previous years, with further details and a sample of comments provided in Table 7. As a conference organised entirely by trainee surgeons for trainee surgeons, understanding what our colleagues want and need from our conference is vital in meeting their educational needs.

Behind the scenes, 12-months of preparation and hard work go into ensuring the smooth running of such a major event. We are grateful for the administrative support provided by Ms Laura Andrews, and by Kristina Gloufchev, Sarah Walsh and Amanda Ly over the conference weekend. We also thank the Council of the Association of Surgeons in Training, Manchester University Medical School student helpers, and all our faculty and speakers for their time and assistance.

Plans are already well advanced for the next conference in Belfast in March 2014, and we will be announcing details over the

summer. Abstract submission and delegate registration will open in the autumn. To be kept up-to-date please subscribe to our email updates via our website <http://www.asit.org/>, follow us on Twitter @ASiTofficial, and join us on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/ASiTofficial>).

2. Online resources

Selected sessions were recorded on video and are available to watch online here: www.asit.org/events/conferences/2013/videos

The conference abstract book is available to download here: www.asit.org/events/conferences/2013/abstract-book

Photographs from the conference are available to view here: www.asit.org/events/conferences/2013/photos

Our nominated conference charity for 2013 was: www.lifebox.org

Funding

The conference was supported through the assistance of our sponsors and exhibitors detailed in Table 7 and we are grateful for the additional support provided by Visit Manchester (www.visitmanchester.com).

Conflict of interest

The authors are current trainees and organisers of the ASiT Conference.

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